

got to be the highest priority. The President has pledged to address it and not be satisfied with the status quo.

Q. Mr. President, one question that you were asked last night about the cost, the transition cost of——

The President. Well, that's part of bringing people together, to figure out how to address the costs. The point is, is that I'm the President who understands Social Security needs to be reformed.

Listen, thank you. Good to see you, Dan. Get a smile on your faces, everybody, 18 days left.

Q. Will you come visit us again?

Senator McCain. Every day. *[Laughter]*

The President. I'm a better person for it, of course. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:07 a.m. while en route to Las Vegas, NV. Gov. Linda Lingle of Hawaii participated in the exchange. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks in Las Vegas, Nevada October 14, 2004

The President. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate you all being here. With only 19 days to the election, the finish line is in sight, and Nevada will be a part of a great nationwide victory in November, the 2d.

I'm proud to be on stage with so many of the Governors, the Nation's Governors. I'm a member of the ex-Governors club. They'll be a member of that club one day soon. *[Laughter]* I know these folks really well. They're hard-working. They bring people together to get the job done in their States. They focus on results, and that's what I've done as your President, and that's what I'll do for 4 more years.

I want to thank our host, Governor Kenny Guinn, for his hospitality. It wasn't very hard to get the Governors to come to Vegas—*[laughter]*—to begin a road trip. The next 2 days, they're going to travel our country to tell people that leadership matters. They're going to tell the people that the best way to make sure America has strong and steady and principled leadership is to put Dick Cheney and me back into office.

It's great to be in the home of the Running Rebels. And that's what I'm doing:

I'm running, and I'm not going to stop until election day. Look, my only regret is that Laura is not here to see this crowd. She's right around the corner at the AARP convention. So the convention said, "Send your best speaker." *[Laughter]* When I married Laura, she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, so long as I never have to give a speech." *[Laughter]* I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. When the people see her speak, they see a compassionate, strong, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He did a really good job in his debate. I admit it, he doesn't have the—he didn't have the waviest hair there on the set. *[Laughter]* I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. *[Laughter]* I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, his ability to get the job done for the American people.

After this we're going to Reno, and then we're going up to Oregon, and I'm proud to be traveling with a great American in John McCain. I like traveling with John. We have a lot of fun. We laugh. We enjoy each other's company, and we share something in common: We both love our Nation.

I want to thank Senator John Ensign, the great Senator from Nevada, for being here today, and Congressman Jon Porter—make sure you put him back into office. Congressman Jim Gibbons from the northern part of this State is with us today as well. Congressman, thanks for coming. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank my friend Lee Greenwood for entertaining the folks. Thank you for coming.

I particularly want to thank the grassroots activists who are here, the people who are going to put up the signs and make the phone calls. I'm here to thank you in advance for what you're going to do over the course of the next 19 days. You're going to tell people they have a duty in our democracy to vote. Get them headed to the polls. But don't overlook discerning Democrats, people like Zell Miller. And when you get them headed to the polls, tell them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back into office.

We had a great debate last night. Those debates, all three debates, clarified the differences in our records, our approaches, and our plans for the future. I'm proud of my record. My opponent seemed to want to avoid talking about his. My record is one of lowering taxes, reforming education, providing prescription drugs to seniors, improving our homeland protection, and waging an aggressive war against the terrorists.

The Senator's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms or results.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Our very different records are a window into what we believe and what we'll do in the next 4 years. The Senator believes in a bigger Government. I believe in more freedom and choices for our citizens. The Senator believes Government should dictate. I believe you should make the decisions.

Sometimes it's a little hard to tell exactly what he believes—[*laughter*—because he tries to obscure his votes. Take health care. Once again, last night, with a straight face—[*laughter*—the Senator tried to say his health care plan is not a Government plan. [*Laughter*] Yet, 22 million new people will be enrolled in a Government program under his plan, the largest expansion of Government health care ever. Eighty percent of the newly insured on his plan would be placed on a Government program like Medicaid. The Senator claimed his plan would help small businesses, yet a study conducted by small-business groups this week concluded Senator Kerry's plan is an overpriced albatross.

I have a different view. I want to make health care more available and affordable by helping small businesses, not saddling them with a bunch of Government rules.

And once again, last night, with a straight face, the Senator, shall we say, refined his answer on the proposed "global test" he would administer before acting to defend America.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. After trying to say it wasn't really a test at all, last night he once again defended his approach, saying, "I think it makes sense." [*Laughter*] The Senator now says we have to pass some international truth standard. Those are his words. The truth is, we should never turn over America's national security decisions to international bodies or leaders of other countries.

In the last few years, the American people have gotten to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I get that from Mom. They know I sometimes mangle the English language. [*Laughter*] I get that from Dad. [*Laughter*] Americans also know that I tell you exactly what I'm going to do and I keep my word.

When I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months. The American economy was sliding into a recession. To help families and get

this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word, and the results are clear. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at the fastest rate of any major industrialized nation. In the past 13 months, we've added 1.9 million new jobs. The unemployment rate in America is at 5.4 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in Nevada is 4 percent. The mining sector is strong. Farm and ranch income is up. More people are owning their own home.

We're moving forward, and there is much more to do. To make sure quality jobs are created in America and to make sure people can find work, America must be the best place in the world to do business. That means we need to reduce the regulations on our job creators. We must end junk lawsuits, which are threatening the small businesses which create most new jobs.

To keep jobs here, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. My plan encourages conservation, encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages new technologies. It encourages clean coal technology and increased domestic production. To keep jobs here, our Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To protect jobs and communities in the West, we need to reduce the risk of devastating wildfires. That's why I was proud to sign the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Under this good law, we are cleaning the underbrush that serves as fuel for fires. Because we acted, our forests are healthier; residents and small businesses are safer; and people across the West are better off.

To create jobs, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up markets around the world for U.S. products. Americans can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair. To create jobs, we need to be wise about how

we spend your money and keep your taxes low.

My opponent has his own history on the economy.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built up quite a record—of a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] He's voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That is a vote for a tax increase about five times every year.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I think that qualifies as a pattern. [Laughter] He can run from his record, but he cannot hide. Now he's promising not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem is, to keep that promise he would have to break almost all of his other ones. [Laughter] His plan to raise taxes in the top two income brackets would raise about \$600 billion. But his spending promises will cost about 4 times that much, more than 2.2 trillion. That's with a "T." [Laughter] That's a lot even for somebody from Massachusetts. [Laughter] See, you can't have it both ways. To pay for all the big spending promises he made, he'll have to raise your taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The choice in this election is clear. My opponent has a history of voting for higher taxes, and he promised to raise them in this campaign. And that's the kind of promise a Washington politician usually keeps. [Laughter] I believe our families and our economy are better off when Americans keep more of what they earn. We will keep your taxes low.

When I came into office, the public schools had been waiting for decades for hopeful reform. Too many of our children were shuffled through school without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability to the schools and end the soft bigotry of low expectations, and I kept my word. Seeing the results—our children are

making sustained gains in reading and math. We're closing the achievement gap for minority students. We're making progress for our families. We will leave no child behind.

To build a more hopeful America, we must have the best prepared and most highly skilled workforce in the world. Most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college education, yet only about one in four of our students gets there. So we'll fund early intervention programs in our high schools to help at-risk students. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous examination before graduation from high school. By raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we'll help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

My opponent has a history on education issues, a history of doing almost nothing. [Laughter] The Senator has pledged to weaken the No Child Left Behind Act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He has proposed diluting the accountability standards and looking at measures like teacher attendance to judge whether students are learning.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. His proposals would undermine the high standards and accountability we worked hard to pass. We're moving beyond the old days of failure and mediocrity and low standards, and we're not going to go back.

When I came to office, we had a problem in Medicare. Medicine was changing, but Medicare wasn't. For example, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for heart surgery but wouldn't pay a dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. It didn't make any sense for our seniors, and it didn't make any sense for our taxpayers. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our

seniors, and I kept my word. The results are clear. Seniors are already getting discounts on medicines, and beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We're moving forward on health care, and there's much more to do. We need to make health care more affordable and more available for all our people. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get care. In a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We need to do more to make sure more children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families.

We must do more to make sure health care is affordable. You know, most of the uninsured are employees of small businesses. Small businesses have trouble affording health care. To help more workers get health care, we should allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies do.

To make sure health care is affordable, we have got to expand health savings accounts so workers in small businesses are able to pay lower premiums and people can save tax-free in a health care account they call their own.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we have got to do something about the junk lawsuits that are running up the costs of your health care. All the lawsuits force doctors to practice defensive medicine, which costs our Government about \$28 billion a year. They cost our Nation's economy anywhere from 60 to 100 billion dollars a year. The lawsuits drive up insurance premiums, which drive good doctors out of practice.

Today I met Dr. James Barber. Three years ago, Dr. Barber paid \$27,000 in insurance premiums as an ob-gyn in Henderson. Last year's premiums would have been

more than \$100,000. He had to stop delivering babies in Nevada. He's now practicing in California, where they have reasonable medical liability laws. His premiums in California are \$33,000, 70 percent of what they would cost in Nevada.

I also met one of his former patients, Nicole Byrne. She said Dr. Barber saved her life during a previous pregnancy. Now she's pregnant again, and she is devastated that Dr. Barber won't be able to deliver her babies. Nicole and Dr. Barber understand that you cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and patients. I am for medical liability reform—now.

The choice in this election is clear. My opponent wants to move in the direction of Government-run health care. I believe health decisions ought to be made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC. I've set out policies that move America toward a positive and optimistic vision. I believe our country can and must be an ownership society. There's a saying that no one ever washes a rental car. *[Laughter]* There's a lot of wisdom in that statement. *[Laughter]* When you own something, you care about it and you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

So we're encouraging entrepreneurship, because every time a small business is started, someone is achieving the American Dream. We're encouraging health savings accounts so people have the security of owning their own health care plan. We're promoting homeownership. More and more Americans own a home today. I love it when somebody opens the door of the place they live and says, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In a new term, I will take the next great step to build an ownership society by strengthening Social Security. Our Social

Security system needs fixing. First, we'll make sure we keep the promise to those who are on Social Security today. I remember, in the 2000 campaign, those ads saying, "If George W. gets elected, they're going to take away your check." Our seniors got their checks. Nobody is going to take away our seniors' checks. Baby boomers like me are going to be just fine when it comes to Social Security.

But our children and our grandchildren are understandably worried about whether Social Security will be around when they need it, and we need to be concerned about them. For their sake, we must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their payroll taxes in a personal account that Washington politicians can never take away. My opponent wants to maintain the status quo when it comes to Social Security.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That is unacceptable. He's against Social Security—these Social Security reforms. And he's just about against just about every other reform that gives more authority and control to individuals. On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes, he takes the side of more centralized control and more bureaucracy. There's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism. Now, he dismisses that as a label—must have seen it differently when he said to a newspaper, "I'm a liberal and proud of it." *[Laughter]*

Others have noticed. The nonpartisan National Journal magazine did a study and named him the most liberal member of the United States Senate. And that's saying something. *[Laughter]* Another group known as the Americans for Democratic Action have given Senator Kerry a higher lifetime liberal rating than Senator Ted Kennedy, and that's an accomplishment.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. See, I have a different record and a different philosophy. I don't

believe in big Government, and I don't believe in indifferent Government. I am a compassionate conservative. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives, not try to run their lives.

In this time of change, some things do not change. Those are the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we will support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is plenty clear. [Laughter] He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, which a bipartisan Congress overwhelmingly passed and my predecessor signed into law. He voted against the ban on the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He called himself the candidate of conservative values, but he has described the Reagan years as a time of moral darkness.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not

for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We will defend the homeland. We'll strengthen our intelligence services. We'll transform the All-Volunteer Army, and we'll keep it an all-volunteer army. We will stay on the offensive. We will strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will continue to spread freedom and liberty, and we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, Afghanistan is a free nation fighting terror. And last Saturday, the people of Afghanistan voted for a President. Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders. Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests. Libya is dismantling its weapons programs. The army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom. And more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's leaders and associates have been brought to justice.

We've got an aggressive strategy to keep us safe, and we'll stand with the people of a free Afghanistan and Iraq. Think about what happened in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that the Taliban ran that country. Young girls couldn't even go to school. They were not only harboring terrorists; they had this dark ideology of hate. And people showed up in droves to vote. Freedom is powerful. People have gone from darkness to light, because of liberty. The first voter in the Afghan Presidential election was a 19-year-old woman.

Iraq is headed toward elections. See, free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them, and that helps us keep the peace. Our mission

is clear. We'll help the countries train their armies and their police so they can do the hard work of defending democracy. We'll help them get on the path to stability and democracy as quickly as possible, then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

We have got a great United States military. I want to thank all the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear today's uniform. I want to thank the military families who are with us today for their sacrifices. And I want to assure the families, we'll keep the commitment I made to our troops. We will make sure they have all the resources they need to complete their missions.

And that's why I went to the United States Congress in September of 2003 and asked for an \$87 billion supplemental request, money necessary to support those troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. We received great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the supplemental request, the funding, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you're out gathering the vote, remind your fellow citizens that only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then against sending the money to support them in harm's way, two of whom—two of those four—are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember my opponent's famous quote, when asked about that vote. He said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, he's given a lot of explanations since that one. One of the most interesting ones is when he finally said, "Well, the whole thing is a complicated matter." [Laughter] There's nothing

complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their freedom. I believe women want to grow up in a free society and raise their children in a free society. I believe that if given a chance, the people of the Middle East will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. You know, there are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time that requires firm resolve and clear vision and a deep faith in the values that makes us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." Governor Pataki was with me. He knows—he remembers those workers and those police and firefighters coming out of the rubble, bloodshot eyes. A guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning trying to figure out how best to defend this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your State asking for the vote, I made this pledge: If you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. at the Thomas & Mack Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; entertainer Lee Greenwood; Senator

Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; and Gov. George E. Pataki of New York.

Remarks in Reno, Nevada October 14, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming out today. It's great to be back in Nevada. It's such a beautiful day. I'm proud to be here in the "Biggest Little City in the World." I'm really pleased to be in a place where the cowboy hats outnumber the suits.

Thank you all for coming. I'm here to ask for the vote. And I want your help. Tell your friends and neighbors to go to the polls on November the 2d. Everybody ought to vote in this country. And tell them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I'm sorry Laura is not here.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. I know it. We were in Las Vegas earlier, and they had an AARP convention there. And the head of the AARP said, "Send your family's best speaker." [Laughter] So Laura went. [Laughter] You know, when I married her, I said—she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, just so long as I never have to give a speech." I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. When she speaks, America sees a compassionate, warm, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's a fine man with good judgment and great experience. He's getting the job done for the American people. I'm proud to be introduced by a unique and strong and great American in John McCain. When he says he's for you, he's really for you. Las Vegas this morning, Reno right now, and then we're headed to Medford, Or-

egon. He's by my side. He's campaigning hard, and I'm proud to have his support.

And I'm proud of the job that Senator John Ensign is doing for the great State of Nevada. He's a really fine man. I want to thank Jim Gibbons for his service as well. Old Congressman Greg Walden from Oregon snuck across the State line. He's with us today. Thanks for coming, Greg. I appreciate you being here.

I'm really proud that Dema Guinn is with us, the first lady of the great State of Nevada. Thank for coming, Dema. I'm proud you're here. How about your attorney general, Brian Sandoval? What a class act he is. I want to thank Brian Krolicki, the State treasurer, for being with us today. I want to thank—Dean Heller is with us today. I'm proud he's here.

I want to thank all the State and local officials. But mainly, I want to thank the grassroots activists, the people who are putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls, the people turning out the vote. With your help, we'll carry Nevada and win a great victory in November.

I enjoyed the debate last night. You know, those debates clarify the differences in our record, our approach, and our plans for the future. I'm proud of my record. My opponent seemed to want to avoid talking about his. [Laughter] My record is one of lowering taxes, reforming education, providing prescription drug coverage to seniors, improving homeland protections, and waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate.